

EMERALD CITIES PILOT PROJECTS

Expanding Upon Comprehensive Recycling Communities

The California Department of Conservation's (DOC) Comprehensive Recycling Communities (CRC) Program focuses state recycling resources into a local community. Currently, the DOC is working with South Lake Tahoe, Tracy, Riverside and Culver City to help these cities increase their beverage container recycling rates. Building upon these specific efforts, the DOC is initiating pilot projects to help cities and counties implement additional sustainable actions to help achieve other State environmental priorities. These include improving water conservation; increasing energy efficiency; improving air quality; reducing auto and fossil fuel use; and ensuring the protection of agricultural land and open space, to name a few.

How does it work?

The DOC can work with local officials to assess the status of local sustainability efforts and identify actions that would support State environmental priorities and targets. The State would also help identify additional government, private and non-profit resources to help implement local actions, such as experts on municipal and regional sustainability and potential grant opportunities.

In order to participate in this pilot program a city or county would voluntarily agree to participate by:

1. Adopting an official resolution committing to help achieve State environmental targets:

- improve air quality and reducing carbon emissions.
- improve the environmental health of local citizens.
- increase solid waste reduction and recycling rates.
- reduce motor vehicle transportation and fuel use.

- implement smart growth/sustainable land use and development principles.
- protect natural resources, agricultural lands, and open space.
- improve energy conservation and efficiency.

2. Joining The Climate Registry (TCR) and commencing a greenhouse gas inventory.

3. Supporting regional efforts of the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program, if the city or county is located within a region with an adopted blueprint plan funded by the State.

Once a city or county has adopted an official resolution, DOC and the city or county would jointly conduct a categorical assessment of the local Governments current state of sustainability based on the State's Sustainable Elements Matrix; jointly propose, evaluate, and select by consensus environmental priorities that help meet or exceed the State's environmental targets; and develop an action plan that identifies specific tasks, necessary resources, and activation timelines. The DOC would provide technical assistance and identify potential state and private sector funds required to implement the plan's activities. State departments with specific expertise would provide training and information directly to the jurisdiction's staff. For example, the Department of General Services (DGS) would agree to have its "green building" staff educate local staff about retrofitting facilities to meet the State's new Green Building Code. The California Energy Commission would help the local jurisdiction join The Climate Registry and begin an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, DOC would provide information on State grants and other funding programs available for sustainability-related activities. The DOC also hopes to engage private and non-profit organizations with an interest in sustainability programs.

What are the Benefits?

State and local governments can work in partnership to promote sustainability at the local level, which ultimately will help California reach its statewide goals. Lessons learned in these collaborative efforts will be shared with other State agencies and the Strategic Growth Council. Specifically, potential benefits include:

1. Funding for cities and counties to implement specific, "on-the-ground" sustainable activities.
2. Funding for "catalyst" projects – technically available but not readily implemented in California – to more quickly achieve State environmental priorities.
3. A "best practices" handbook and toolbox that other cities and counties could use to implement sustainable actions.
4. State funds and resources are directed to communities that commit to achieve State environmental targets.
5. Identification of barriers to implementing environmental actions, including local cost burdens, regulatory conflicts, and other disincentives to sustainability.
6. Coordination of the delivery of State resources for better implementation of State environmental priorities.
7. Leveraging of limited State and local funds with private and non-profit resources to increase the quantity and quality of sustainable actions at the local level, and help achieve State environmental priorities.

For additional information, please contact:

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